

CONSERVATION WORKING GROUP

7/14/10

**Environmental Defense Center Conference Room,
906 Garden Street, Santa Barbara**

Present: Linda Krop (Environmental Defense Center), Greg Helms (The Ocean Conservancy), Kristi Birney Rieman (Environmental Defense Center), Kira Redmond (SB Channelkeeper), Jean Holmes (LWVSB), Debra Herring, Vic Cox.
CINMS Staff: Michael Murray
ONMS West Coast Region Staff: Lisa Wooninck, Regional Policy Coordinator

I. INTRODUCTIONS

Attendees introduced themselves.

II. OFFSHORE RENEWABLE ENERGY

A. CWG Report: Kristi updated the group regarding the progress on our offshore renewable energy report. She recently hired a new Bren intern to assist with the regulatory section. She is also reviewing materials and references from the Climate Hill Ocean Week conference (see below), and incorporating additional information on technologies and impacts as appropriate.

B. Climate Hill Ocean Week report: Linda reported on her trip (along with SAC Chair Eric Kett) to the CHOW conference in D.C. The conference focused on offshore energy and included presentations by agency staff, industry, and public stakeholder interests. Several members of Congress also addressed the conference. Linda noted that she was able to bring a lot of information back to SB that will help us write our offshore energy report. She also met a lot of people that we may contact for more information.

III. SHIPPING

A. Whale Presence in Channel, Notice to Mariners: At the SAC meeting, we will receive updates regarding whale sightings, collection of AIS data, the Notices to Mariners. The Notice went out earlier this year, thanks to improved policies for NMFS to receive and act on sighting reports.

B. Acoustics Follow-up with Dan Basta: Mr. Basta sent a response, thanking the SAC for our support for acoustic research and monitoring in the CINMS. We discussed the potential for the Sanctuary program to work more regionally and in partnership with other entities as a means to enhance opportunities for such research and monitoring. Mike will forward our letter to other SACs. Vic mentioned a recently released report about right whales increasing the volume of their calls as environmental noise increases.

C. Port Access Route Study (PARS): The SAC approved the letter we proposed in May. Mike reported that the Coast Guard may hold public meetings in the fall. We will receive an update at the September SAC meeting.

D. NMFS Workshop: Mike noted that NMFS is compiling information from the workshop and will develop a database that identifies relevant information and data gaps.

IV. WATER QUALITY

A. SBCK Water Quality Characterization Report: Kira presented SBCK's water quality characterization report, which implements a key recommendation of the CWG Water Quality Report. The Report, which synthesizes information from a variety of sources, notes the condition of water quality in the Channel and recommends further monitoring. The report will be on the SBCK website, hopefully by the end of this week. Kira will make a presentation to the CINMS staff. The CWG would like SBCK to present the report to the SAC, with the hope that the SAC will endorse the report. Mike pointed out that the Shearwater has new equipment that can be used for water sampling.

V. OCEAN ACIDIFICATION

A. West Coast Task Force: Linda reported that the next meeting is scheduled for July 26.

B. Gulf of Farallones Conference on Climate Change: We discussed the fact that the Gulf of Farallones NMS will sponsor a conference on climate change, which will include acidification.

C. NOAA Acidification Research Plan: NOAA's research plan is now public. The plan is separated into regions, and includes a West Coast research element.

D. Deep Sea Coral Cruise: Mike reported that the CINMS was included in the ocean acidification deep sea coral cruise. Conditions were ideal, and water quality samples were taken in our area.

VI. MLPA / MARINE RESERVES

A. Monitoring Workshop: On July 19, there will be a workshop in Santa Barbara regarding monitoring of marine protected areas.

B. MLPA EIR Scoping: The Department of Fish and Game will hold a scoping hearing for the South Coast EIR on July 23 in Long Beach. The deadline for submitting written comments is August 3.

C. Fish and Game Commission: The next Fish and Game Commission hearing regarding the South Coast plan will take place in October. The August 5 meeting has been cancelled.

VII. AQUACULTURE

A. NOAA Proposed Policy: Comments from the listening session are posted on the NOAA website.

B. HR 4363 (Capps) / Vitter: Nothing new to report.

VIII. RIGS TO REEFS

A. AB 2503: The state bill passed the Assembly and the first policy committee in the Senate. Some environmental groups oppose the bill, while others have been negotiating amendments. We discussed the fact that federal law (the National Fishing Enhancement Act) may require the state to allow fishing at the decommissioned sites if they are converted to "artificial reefs." We also noted that the bill would apply to both state and federal platforms in the Channel region.

B. Resources Agency / Ocean Science Trust Report: The OST report was presented to the Ocean Protection Council at a meeting in Santa Barbara on June 25. The report identifies numerous "data gaps" and yet is cited in AB 2503 as providing the basis for new legislation. Public comments on the report will be accepted until July 25.

IX. OTHER SAC ISSUES

A. National Marine Sanctuary Act Reauthorization: Kristi reported on her participation in a listening session sponsored by the author, Congresswoman Capps. The bill includes several substantive components that could enhance Sanctuary management and resource protection opportunities and protocols. Kristi reported that she has spoken to some commercial fishers who are concerned about the bill. We noted that while the bill does allow for designation of marine protected areas (which is already allowed), it also requires consultation with the Fishery Management Councils (also already required). Kristi submitted comments on the bill.

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